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DE RUEHIL #5199 3440605
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R 100605Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3724
INFO RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC
RUEHQP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 8342
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 4299
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 2896
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 7885
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2433
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0355

UNCLAS ISLAMABAD 005199

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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USDA FOR APHIS, FAS/OFSO/OSTA/OCRA AND FSIS
CAIRO FOR APHIS/DR. LINDA LOGAN
KABUL FOR USAID/DR. ROBERT SMITH
NEW DELHI FOR AGMINSCOUNS/HIGGINS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KFLU](#) [TBIO](#) [EAGR](#) [AMGT](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: ANOTHER OUTBREAK OF AVIAN INFLUENZA IN PAKISTAN

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Pakistani authorities reported an outbreak of avian influenza (AI) affecting 18,000 birds on a commercial poultry farm 50 kilometers north of Islamabad. The Government of Pakistan (GOP) has confirmed four poultry outbreaks so far this season, with 81,000 birds dead or culled. There have been no confirmed cases of AI in humans. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Pakistan's National Reference Laboratory for Avian Influenza (NRLAI) confirmed on December 3 the presence of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza at a commercial poultry farm in Murree, 50 kilometers (35 miles) north of Islamabad. The infection was confined to a single 35-day old breeder flock, 3,000 of which died before animal health authorities were notified. Standard quarantine measures have been taken and the remaining 15,000 birds in the flock have been culled. The Government of Pakistan (GOP) is gathering relevant data and will report the case to the Office International Des Epizooties (OIE).

¶3. (U) The Murree outbreak is the fourth in the 2007-2008 migratory bird season. The first case occurred on October 26 on a commercial farm in Buttal, 150 kilometers (105 miles) to the north of Islamabad. 4,000 of the diseased 7-week old breeder flock died of H5N1 and 38,000 birds were culled. Animal health authorities confirmed two additional infections on commercial farms in Abbottabad, also to the north of Islamabad, on November 1 and 20. A total of 21,000 birds were culled at both infection sites. Consequently, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock has urged all poultry farms to remain vigilant, improve sanitary conditions and report unusually high poultry mortality rates.

¶4. (SBU) Epidemiologists at the National Institute of Health reported to Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) personnel in Islamabad that all recent suspected human AI cases tested negative. There have been no recorded cases of AI in humans in Pakistan.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: More poultry outbreaks are expected as the season progresses, given the pattern of last year's outbreaks. Historically, the disease is first reported in the north of country, gradually spreading south to the provinces of Punjab and Sindh. Migratory bird patterns and poor sanitation conditions on commercial poultry farms continue to be the primary drivers of AI infection. The GOP has initiated a three-year, USD 19.6 million national program for the prevention and control of avian influenza. However, a more intensive, sustained and widespread program is needed to effectively prevent and control the spread of the virus. End

Comment.

PATTERSON